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ABSTRACT

A description and analysis of an unsuccessful secondary school evaluation in Australia is presented. The idea of a review originated with the vice principal and was received by the staff with minimal enthusiasm. Following the review, the staff agreed that nothing had been accomplished, and the reasons for the failure are summarized in this report. Due to inadequate preparation in terms of the review's purpose, the staff lost interest in the project. The noninvolvement of the principal, and the failure of the overseeing body to provide feedback, also were cited as contributing to the lack of success. The failure to provide a definite time scale for the various evaluation activities was a weakness, as was the nonavailability of a time allotment for the organizing committee. A clear delineation of evaluation goals was not made, and the total support of the staff was not sought. The failure of the vice principal to guarantee that the review's results would determine future policy was seen as a basic weakness in the project. A copy of the school review instrument is appended. (JD)

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TEACHERS AS EVALUATORS PROJECT

GIVING AN ACCOUNT

PART II

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AN UNSUCCESSFUL EVALUATION

A brief description and analysis of an unsuccessful evaluation undertaken by Teachers at Mountain View Technical School.

Curriculum Development Centre, Canberra, Australia

(A Project jointly funded by C.D.C. & E.R.D.C.)

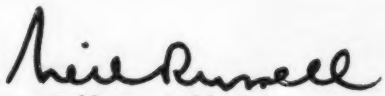
SP 017714

FOREWORD

When giving accounts of school-level curriculum evaluation experiences, many teachers do not include details of unsuccessful procedures or approaches.

However, at recent conferences and workshops on curriculum evaluation, teachers have indicated that they would like to hear more about evaluations that have gone "astray" and more importantly, why this has occurred.

The following account was prepared by a teacher in an Australian school, and it highlights a number of problems relating to school evaluation; in particular the need to develop a commitment to evaluation at the school level. For obvious reasons the teacher who wrote the account and the school concerned must remain anonymous. The account is presented in the belief that there are lessons to be learnt from this evaluation.



Neil Russell
Project Officer

AN EVALUATION OF THE

MOUNTAIN VIEW SCHOOL REVIEW

BACKGROUND

Early in second term 1979, the Vice Principal of Mountain View Secondary School announced at an Education Committee meeting (a regular meeting of all staff which airs matters that affect the school as a whole) that it would be a 'good idea' to have a school review. When pressed by the staff for more details, the Vice Principal spoke in terms of reviewing the school's aims and programmes, but was rather vague as to the procedures to be used in the review. It was to be the responsibility of the Education Committee Executive[1] to draw up the areas to be reviewed, and the methods that would be used to obtain the appropriate information.

This was not the school's first experience with a review. Previously the school had been visited by a Review Panel when this option became available to Secondary Schools. On this occasion, the Panel consisted of representatives from the Education Department, invited members with expertise in the educational field, and representatives from the community, as well as an observer from the appropriate Teacher Union. An Interim Report was published by the Review Panel, but a full report was never circulated. Many of the recommendations from the Review Panel (such as departmental budgets) were never implemented, and much of the staff concern with another review stemmed from the feeling that a lot of effort could be expended, with no guarantee that change would be implemented even if it was recommended as a result of the new review.

A START IS MADE

The staff accepted the idea of the review, if not enthusiastically, at least with a feeling that "looking at what we're on about" might lead to a rejuvenation of enthusiasm, and a clarification of purpose.

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1. The Education Committee Executive consists of the Vice Principal (ex-officio), and elected representatives from the Workshops, Maths/Sci, Humanities, as well as four general staff representatives.

The Education Committee Executive met, and in August issued a Staff Questionnaire (Appendix I) which dealt mainly with the aims of the school, and communication channels. There was also discussion about which other groups should be involved - parents, students - but no action was taken.

In early Term 3 the results of the Staff Questionnaire were tabulated, and the Education Committee Executive wrote a brief overview of the main points raised by respondents to the questionnaire (Appendix II), but this was not circulated amongst the staff. On September 19th, at the regular Education Committee meeting, the staff were organized into 'buzz' groups to discuss the various influences on the school and its programmes, and what the objectives of the school 'ought to be'. A report of this discussion was issued to all staff members within a few days (Appendix III).

In October a communication from Technical Schools Committee (Appendix IV) arrived in the school; it discussed a general review of secondary technical education, and school communities were asked to present submissions expressing their views, particularly related to the totality of the curriculum and the addition of a sixth year.[2] The Vice Principal related this letter to the internal school review situation.

In November the Vice Principal issued to all staff a sheet which detailed the "Steps in the Development/Reassessment of School Aims" (Appendix V). Staff commented on the fact that the Review (which originally was going to look at a multiplicity of aspects of the school) had now become a re-examination of the aims of the school. Staff interest in the whole project had deteriorated into apathy. Little had been achieved - confusion on the part of the staff generally (and in particular by members of the Education Committee executive, four of whom had resigned by this stage) had not been dispelled.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

An In-Service day has been scheduled for early 1980 - as yet (February 1980) nothing has been done about the organization of the day. The In-Service

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2. Most technical schools only have 5 years of post-primary education. Some of the larger institutions, however, have a sixth (or in a few cases a seventh) year, and there are moves to extend this sixth year to all technical schools.

co-ordinator for the school has been unable to get any directions/ guidelines from either the Education Committee Executive or the Vice Principal as to the objectives of the day (outlined on Appendix V).

So, in February 1980, this is where the review rests. It has just petered out ..... although the Vice Principal was heard to remark the other day that "We must have another look at that review idea this year". His audience rapidly melted away .....

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE REVIEW

It is necessary at the outset of this assessment to state that as the writer has been intimately involved in various aspects of the review, elements of bias must be inherently present.

It is intended to use the Teachers as Evaluators Project guidelines (Appendix VI) as the vehicle for the assessment of the review. These guidelines have previously been found to be a superior means of evaluating a school programme.

1. Purpose of the Review. This was never clearly defined, except in terms of "looking at what we're doing". While it is imperative that teachers evaluate their programmes and performance, both individually and as a total school, it is also essential that the purposes of the evaluation be understood by all. In the Mountain View Secondary School Review, the purposes of the review were not clearly defined.

2. Motivations. The impetus for the review came from the Vice Principal. The Principal has at no stage been involved in the process, although he is the decision-maker and educational leader of the school. The Education Committee Executive became involved at the behest of the Vice Principal. The staff although co-operative, generally had reservations, particularly as a result of an earlier review, when the recommendations of the Review Panel were to a large degree ignored. There seems to be no particular reason as to why the evaluation was suggested at that time - it certainly was not the response to a felt need within the school.

3. Contributors. The organization of the review devolved onto the Education Committee Executive, overseen by the Vice Principal. It was envisaged that the total school community, not merely teachers, would be involved. Many teachers were reluctant to fill in questionnaires on two counts - firstly, many felt the exercise would be a waste of time and, secondly, others felt that anonymity could not be guaranteed, and hence were reluctant to be completely honest in their responses.

4. Evaluation Roles. It would appear that little consideration was given to this aspect of the review. The Vice Principal appointed the Education Committee Executive to oversee the proceedings, to draw up and interpret the questionnaires. No thought was given to the role of facilitator, nor was a consultant used. The time span for the completion of the review was also left vague. In the latter part of 1979, when the total school review became a "reassessment of school aims", a document was produced by the Vice Principal outlining the steps and personnel to be involved in the process, but again no time scale was used.

The Education Committee Executive was given no special time release in order to complete their task. In 1979 the Executive met for an hour each week in their preparation time, or at lunch-time or after school; as well as the review, they were also involved in the discussion of other issues.

5. Audience. This aspect, also, was never clearly defined. It was originally assumed (perhaps erroneously) by the staff that a document would be produced for staff discussion. With the production of the Vice Principal's document in November other audiences were mentioned including the School Council, parents, education department.

6. What will be evaluated? Originally it was assumed that as well as the aims of the school, many other aspects of the school's programme would be evaluated - open/closed units, vertical grouping, the elective programme. It was also an expressed hope by many staff members that other aspects of the school could be also investigated, particularly communication within the school, the decision-making process, staff morale.

Staff interest in the project declined rapidly when the main thrust of the review seemed to be only an examination of the aims of the school.

7. How will the information be collected? So far the only methods used for the collection of information appear to be the Staff Questionnaire (Appendix I) and the reports from the 'buzz' groups (Appendix III). This would appear to be a rather limited sample of material, and would also seem to neglect other members of the school community such as parents and students.

8. Are the methods to be used for data collection feasible? As stated previously, the methods so far used are adequate, although somewhat limited by themselves, and in terms of the group used. At present the material collected represents the views of only one group; there is also the additional problem that some staff were not satisfied that anonymity could be guaranteed, and were not completely honest in their responses.

9. Release of Information. One criticism of the Vice Principal and the Education Committee Executive that was often heard in the staff-room in 1979 was that relating to a lack of feedback on the progress of the review. No feedback was given to the staff on the questionnaire, although late in the year there was some improvement with the issuing of the report on the 'buzz' groups, and also the stages involved in the review of aims (as it had become). No comment was made as to other aspects such as control of information - the Vice Principal seems to have assumed a proprietary right over all the information collected.

10. Judgements. Again, this area is cloudy. Little forward planning appears to have been done - this area was not covered in any way.

11. What resources are necessary for the efficient conduct of the evaluation. The only resource which appeared to be considered by the Education Committee Executive was the provision of a special time allotment for the Executive in order to coordinate the review. This was not allowed - and consequently led to considerable hostility on the part of the Executive towards the administration. Other resources were not considered.

12. Reports. This topic was not discussed in any detail. It was assumed that a report would be issued to the staff at some future date, but wider distribution was not considered. Late in 1979 the Vice Principal mentioned the School Council and the Parents' and Citizens' group as involved in the process - but this was not clarified.

13. Outcomes. The staff generally wanted a guarantee that action would result from the review. The Vice Principal was unable to give this guarantee, as the Principal is the only person in the school able to authorize change. Thus the question of outcomes was also unresolved.

CONCLUSIONS

The Mountain View Secondary School review (incomplete though it is) does not appear to have been a satisfactory evaluation. Although no conscious theoretical framework was established, the review resembles Stake's Countenance model[4] to some degree, in that the original purpose was to both describe and judge an educational programme. However, due to inadequate preparation in terms of the purposes of the review and the readiness of the staff to be part of it, the initial impetus was quickly lost. The non-involvement of the Principal in the process, and the failure of the overseeing body to provide feedback to the staff must also be considered to be contributing factors. No clear statement of purpose was issued, until the total school review was condensed into a re-appraisal of school aims. The failure to provide a definite time scale for the various activities was also a weakness, as was the non-availability of a time allotment for the organizing committee. The effect on staff morale of the review process cannot be underestimated; there exists a feeling that the whole exercise was a waste of time, and "anyway, nothing would have changed". The failure of the Vice Principal to give a guarantee that the results of the review would determine future policy was a very basic weakness of the whole project.

The experience of the Mountain View Secondary School review of 1979 leads to two basic conclusions for the conduct of any future review or

4. Stake, R.E. The Countenance of Educational Evaluation. Teachers College Record 68: 523-540, 1967.

evaluation - firstly, the aims/purposes of such evaluation must be clearly defined before any action is taken, and a programme to achieve such aims clearly delineated (complete with time scale), and secondly, the staff need to be totally supportive of such a programme (preferably the initiative for an evaluation should come from the staff) and kept informed - of its progress. Hopefully, any future evaluation at Mountain View Secondary School will incorporate these essentials ..... although it may be a while before any future evaluation eventuates - evaluation has become a dirty word at Mountain View.

APPENDIX I

MOUNTAIN VIEW SCHOOL

School Review - Survey No. 1.

Aims and Objectives of the School

Does this school have a stated aim or objective? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, (i) Please write down what you believe the aim is -

If yes, (ii) is this aim generally highlighted in the school? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes to (ii) indicate how with 2-3 examples.

If no, indicate with 2-3 examples

If yes (iii) do you think your department deliverately tries to put this aim into action? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Example

If yes (iv) do you attempt to carry out this aim in your teaching programme? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Example

If yes (v) do you feel that this statement is an adequate expression of what M.V.S. does? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Further comments?

From your viewpoint as a teacher, write down the six most important educational things that M.V.S. does.

From your viewpoint as a teacher, write down the most important educational things you do.

M.V.S. is sometimes described as being 'different' or 'experimental'. From your point of view as a teacher write down -

(a) the ways you see the school in general as being different.

(b) the way you see your teaching (curriculum, methods etc) as being different.

From your point of view as a teacher, in what ways do you see the school as being similar to other Technical schools.

In the same sense, in what ways do you thing your teaching is similar to the practices of teachers in other schools.

Do you have any further comments about the school's aim as it is now?

Communications (answer from your viewpoint as a teacher).

There are several communications channels in the school. Do you think that, in general, the flow of information through the school is adequate?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Which of the following communication flows do you think is the most effective.

☐ Down through the hierarchy
☐ up through the hierarchy
☐ across, i.e. between teacher and teacher
☐ between departments

Which of the following flows do you think is most important to you as a teacher?

☐ down through the hierarchy
☐ up through the hierarchy
☐ across, between teacher and teacher
☐ between departments

Rank the items in the following sets in order of importance:

A

- ☐ Daily Bulletin
- ☐ Duty Student
- ☐ P.A.
- ☐ Personal contact

B

- ☐ Staff Socials
- ☐ H.D. meetings
- ☐ 8.50 am meetings
- ☐ informal contact

C

- ☐ Staff meeting
- ☐ Department meeting
- ☐ Ed. committee meeting
- ☐ Co-ordination meeting

D

- ☐ the diary
- ☐ informal student contact
- ☐ co-ordination
- ☐ classroom activities
- ☐ term reports

E

- ☐ Parent contact through
- ☐ the diary
- ☐ the newsletter
- ☐ parent-teacher nights etc.
- ☐ parents called to school
- ☐ term reports

Given that our main task is to 'teach the kids', rank the following items in each of the sets -

A

- ☐ open units - contracts
- ☐ open units
- ☐ closed units
- ☐ electives

B

- ☐ Your department's aims
- ☐ the subject syllabus
- ☐ the school's aim
- ☐ lesson notes

C

- ☐ library
- ☐ careers counselling
- ☐ work experience

D

- ☐ camps
- ☐ clubs
- ☐ excursions

E

- ☐ Skill development
- ☐ curriculum
- ☐ subject materal
- ☐ student choise of subject

F

- ☐ 1. Teacher initiated program
- ☐ 2. student initiated program
- ☐ 3. external syllabus
- ☐ 4. Mixture of 1. and 2.

Were you on the staff at the time of the last review?

Do you think the idea of an internal school review is worthwhile?

OVERVIEW OF STAFF QUESTIONNAIRES ON SCHOOL REVIEW

(Prepared by Education Committee Executive,
but not circulated to staff)

Although there were significant areas of agreement on what the aims of the school should be (or were) (e.g. develop individual's potential, prepare the student for place in the world - socially, job, leisure - develop sense of responsibility in students) there seemed to be great confusion and uncertainty on how these aims were to be achieved. As well, significant numbers of staff appeared confused as to what the school's stated aims are.

Even if aims and purpose were unanimously agreed on, the structure and procedures that should best be used for achieving these aims present another area of confusion.

Is confusion over the school's aims aggrevated by the present economic circumstances where getting the qualifications needed for a job can over-ride the less tangible of the school's aims (developing a sense of responsibility, for example). Is there a general swing in the community towards conservatism in education and are we fighting a rearguard action all the more difficult because staff are not convinced of the value of some of O.T.S.'s objectives (stated or implicit) anyway?

N.B. that perception of the school as different was not very strong. The perception of the school as similar seemed just as strong.

Suggested starting points.

- clear and agreed statement of the school's purpose
- evaluation of recent changes in programmes (and of programmes that have operated in the same way for some time) e.g. Maths system of grouping; reading units, closing of Humanities Open units; how have these changes measured up to their objectives?

- how do we implement an agreed school purpose?
- communication must be stepped up between departments so that overall operation of the scheme can be seen by all.

Yours, "Confused"

APPENDIX III

MOUNTAIN VIEW

SCHOOL REVIEW

Report on Education Committee Meeting held on 19.9.79 (Committee broke up into a number of Buzz groups).

The following suggestions/comments were made -

1. Major groups/areas that provide input into the school - teachers, parents, students, community, council, Education Department, administration, business, T.A.F.E., Tertiary institutions, employers, other schools, resource people, Agriculture Department.

2. The following groups must be consulted:
   Staff, P. & C., School Council, industrial groups, students, community, future employers.

3. The following "ought to be" objectives of the school:

   - literacy and numeracy
   - ability to think for oneself, understand and solve problems in all aspects of life
   - social development - working, co-operating with each other, staff, other adults
   - preparation for job
   - catering for individual differences
   - emphasis on relationships and caring for one another
   - extending middle of the road and under achievers - as well as gifted
   - more parent involvement in student's education
   - more parent/mature age students
   - more community involvement - clubs, general curricula
   - physical fitness
   - awareness and appreciation of the world in which they live

- develop positive attitudes towards neatness, carefulness, resourcefulness
- develop problem solving techniques e.g. common sense decision making
- provide a 'broad' education so that students can adapt to changing technological conditions
- develop the structure of education by exposing students to key ideas/areas both in and out of subject areas
- develop the psychomotor and cognitive skills associated with manipulation, communication and problem solving
- develop interests beyond specific vocational needs
- develop a responsible attitude towards learning so that students become more self reliant and independent.

NEWSHEET

TSC

TECHNICAL SCHOOLS COMMITTEE

Review of Secondary Technical Education

The Acting Director of Technical Education, Mr R.G. Ritchie has called for a major review of curriculum policy and structure in secondary technical education.

He told the Technical Schools Committee meeting on October 5 that the review was necessary to ensure that secondary technical education remained relevant and meaningful. Within this investigation Mr Ritchie has asked the Technical Schools Committee to consider the advantages and disadvantages of extending the current scope of secondary technical education from years 7-11 to years 7-12.

Mr Ritchie told the Technical Schools Committee that the proposal should not be seen as merely tacking on one more year.

> "I want the six years to be seen as a totality" he said.
>
> "There have been major changes in retention rates and the age at which students leave school, in the nature and extent of available tertiary education, in the requirements demanded by industry and commerce for students entering the workforce, in community attitudes towards education and in the availability of work for students leaving school".
>
> "I believe it's every young person's right to a basic education consisting of six years of primary schooling and six years of secondary education. Now seems an appripriate time to extend that principle to young people undertaking secondary technical courses".

Mr Ritchie said the achievements of this objective might necessitate curriculum changes to suit the needs of today's conditions.

"I believe it demands a greater accent on life centred courses".

"Ideally I would like to see technical education so exciting and relevant that young people would leave with regret", Mr Ritchie said.

Principals have been asked to have the review discussed at staff meetings, and by education committees, school councils and other school organizations.

Written submissions expressing the views of the school community should be sent to the Technical Schools Committee by early December. These submissions should consider both the totality of the curriculum and the addition of a sixth year.

The Technical Schools Committee is a widely representative committee of people involved in technical education. Its role is to advise the Director of Technical Education on educational policies and programs at the secondary technical level. The summary of proceedings of the Technical Schools Committee is distributed to all technical schools and technical colleges with secondary components. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide a more immediate summary of key issues discussed by the Technical Schools Committee. This issue contains a summary of matters discussed at the October 5th meeting.

Technical Schools Committee Composition

The Technical Schools Committee has recommended a number of changes to its composition. The most significant is increasing teacher representation from six to eleven. The increase in teacher numbers will enable teacher members to be appointed on a regional basis. Another major change will be the appointment of a representative of a parent group to the committee.

Amendment to Assessment Instruction

Following a review by the Curriculum Policy Advisory Committee the annual instruction to technical schools concerning procedures for year 11 assessment will be amended. This will mean that schools will only be required to indicate on forms returned to Examinations Branch whether students have passed or not passed in particular subjects. The blanket requirement that subjects should be marked out of 100 no longer applies.

Papers

Three papers presented to the Technical Schools Committee are to be circulated to schools for comment before final recommendations are made. These papers deal with student welfare, industrial leave for teachers, and teacher preparation and in-service education.

A further paper has been prepared on recent changes within the Technical Schools Division and the Education Department as a whole. This paper, entitled "The Changing Context" is currently being printed for distribution to all technical school teachers.

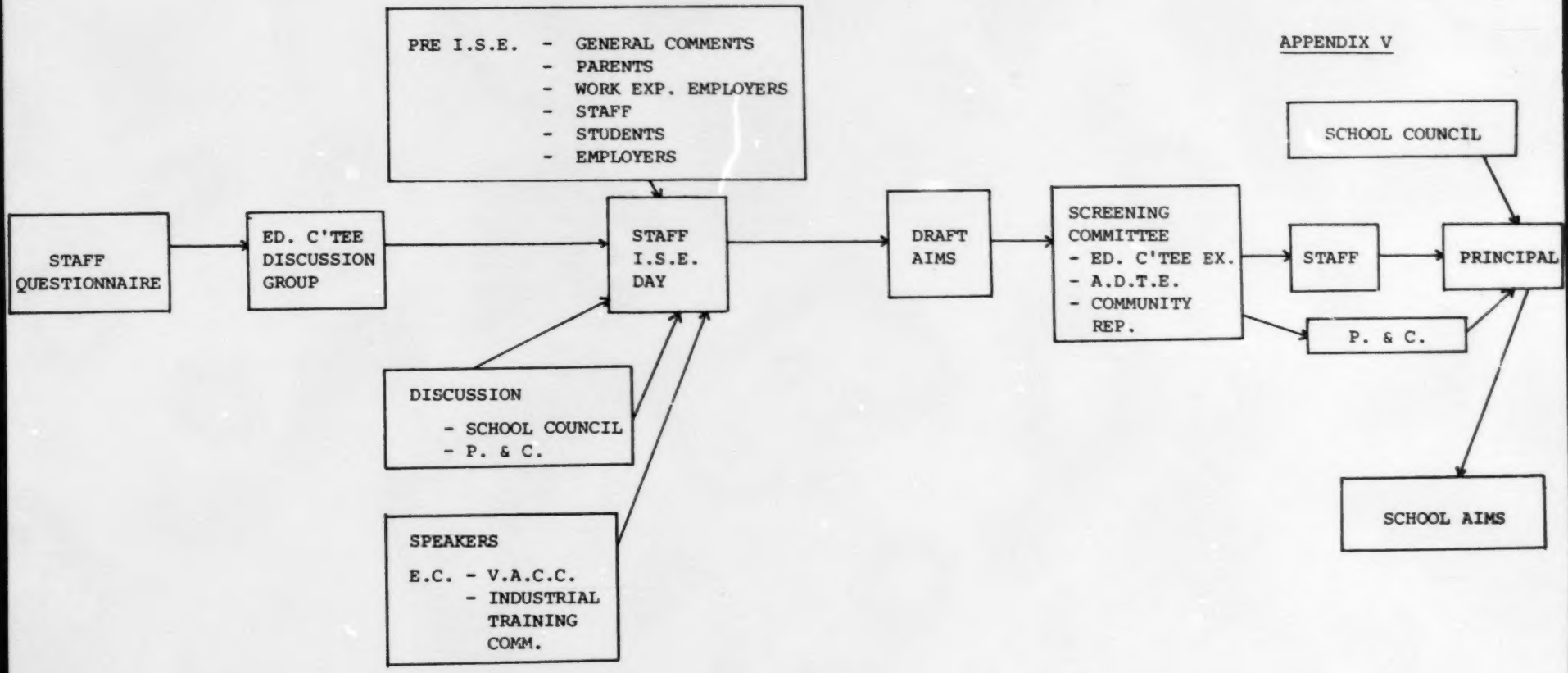
Reports

As a result of the Bendigo regional report concerning the attendance of students in years 7-9 at particular post-primary schools, the Acting Director of Technical Education has agreed that Technical Schools Division official statements should not support the view that there is no difference between years 7-9 curriculum in high and technical schools.

The Ballarat region expressed concern at the development of blanket pre-apprenticeship testing in reading and arithmetic and the relating of such tests to young people's employment prospects. The region's concern was shared by the Technical Schools Committee.

Other reports of staffing, buildings and facilities, teacher education and curriculum projects were also considered. These will be reported fully, along with all other matters, in the Summary of Proceedings of the Technical Schools Committee.

APPENDIX V



TEPS IN THE DEVELOPMENT/REASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL AIMS - MOUNTAIN VIEW SCHOOL